

GARDENING

Controlling Weeds and Eliminating Pests

THE mildness of most of March, and in particular the dry sunny spells, gave many gardeners the chance to catch up on their cultivation work, so retarded by the wet and cold of the winter. The same features will probably encourage the pests to emerge earlier than usual, so it is opportune to examine some chemicals, both those that can be used for weed control and those available for fighting pests and diseases.

For some time commercial growers have used very small amounts of simazine for controlling weeds among trees and shrubs, but these treatments have not been recommended for the amateur, partly because the dosage is critical, and partly because results and the effect on different plants on different soils have been variable. However, this year, Printop Rose Bed weedkiller containing simazine has appeared in an amateur's pack. It is recommended only for rose beds, but not where they are underplanted with bulbs, or where it is intended to plant anything else for at least seven months after treating the soil.

Simazine is, of course, much used in other formulations such as Weedex for controlling weeds on paths and drives, being preferred to sodium chlorate as it is not water-soluble and is only held in suspension. Thus it does not seep to adjoining beds or borders.

For a Poor Lawn

Paraquat is now fairly well known—it kills weeds by acting on the green chlorophyll in the leaves, and is completely inactivated when it touches the soil. This property can be exploited to the full if one has, for example, a lawn that, while smooth and level is composed of poor quality or undesirable grasses, such as the creeping native forms of *agrostis* which make a mat of stems that are always brownish and need constant raking out. If the whole lawn, or the undesirable parts, are watered with paraquat, the grass will be killed: then the lightest of cultivation will be sufficient to make a tilth to sow a good lawn mixture. There is still time to do this work this spring.

To keep clean ground clean there is Herbon Garden Herbicide. This kills the weed seeds at the moment of germination, but has no effect on established weeds. Thus

we are today well provided with chemical aids to weed control.

Algae are always a nuisance in the garden. They form a green slime on paving, on greenhouse glass, and on many other surfaces. They can now be controlled by a new chemical, "Dimanin".

Turning to pests, this season's offering—"Pestex"—is claimed by the manufacturers to control more pests than any other insecticide. It is both a contact and a systemic insecticide and contains malathion and rogor. There are certain limitations on its use—certain plants which should not be sprayed with it, and crops for human consumption should not be gathered within 14 days of treatment.

Read the Label

It is always wise to ring the changes with insecticides, because pests can build up resistance to chemicals. Derris is still popular because, as far as I know, there are no authenticated cases of resistance to this natural product. However things move so fast in this field that even now this statement may be out of date. Even more important is for the gardener to read the label and follow the instructions to the letter.

Unfortunately the print on the label is necessarily very small on small bottles, and if you have left your spectacles indoors it is tempting to use the stuff and trust to your memory. If you do this you cannot blame the manufacturer for a failure, or for damage to a crop.

Every year I receive inquiries about some mysterious trouble that has affected certain plants. In many cases it has been caused by the use of a watering can that has previously been used to apply a selective weedkiller to a lawn, or a total weedkiller to a garden path. It has probably been washed out inadequately, and sufficient traces of the selective weedkiller have remained to cause the symptoms. So it is only common sense to have several cans, clearly marked "selective weedkiller", "total weedkiller", and "paraquat", if one intends to use all three types of weedkiller. This saves time because it is not necessary to wash out the cans with detergent after use, and it eliminates the risk of damage.

Do not be in a hurry to put selective weedkillers or combined "weed and feed" fertilizers on a lawn. They work much better when the nights are warm, so even if the weeds offend the eye leave them alone until the weather warms up in May.

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